

# FACT SHEET ON WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



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## Situational analysis of women migrant workers (WMWs) from the Republic of Moldova

- In the context of the changes taking place in the Republic of Moldova and an increasing number of women migrants, the phenomenon of migration has become more critical in terms of the economic, social and political life of the country.
- Moldova is primarily a country of origin for migration, and to a much lesser extent a country of destination or transit<sup>1</sup>. Regarding the latter, data from the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU (FRONTEX) shows that only an insignificant number of irregular migrants to the EU transit through Moldova. The country itself does not have clear, unified and gender segregated data regarding the number of seasonal, temporary or illegal migrants. Under the Association Agreement between Republic of Moldova and the European Union and the visa liberalization regime, travel procedures have been significantly simplified. Many Moldovan citizens hold dual citizenship, and migrate and obtain employment on the basis of Romanian documents. Moreover, due to the lack of control by Moldovan authorities over the Transnistrian region, it is very difficult to monitor cross border movements.
- The National Bureau of Statistics, in the Labour Force Survey, estimates that the number of Moldovan migrants is about 10% of Moldova's population. Women migrants make up 36% of all migrants and 44% of long-term migrants<sup>2</sup>.
- The proportion of men who migrate is slightly higher than that of women. The situation in this domain has not changed significantly since 1995. Women migrant workers choose Italy, Greece, Israel, and Turkey while the men more often choose destinations such as the Russian Federation, Portugal, Romania and Ukraine. There is a clear gender division of jobs done by Moldovan migrants. More than half of Moldovan migrants work abroad in the construction sector (68% in the CIS and 29% in the EU). The second most common occupation abroad is in domestic services provided to private households, especially characteristic of migrants to EU countries (47.3%)<sup>3</sup>. Most of the women migrants are employed in domestic work and most of the male migrants work in the construction sector.
- Women migrants tend to be less mobile than men migrant workers, and they travel home less often than men. This is mainly due, firstly, to the nature of their work, compared to the seasonal work flows of men: where the highest number of emigrants is registered in

the third quarter of the year, and the lowest in the fourth and first. A great number of labour migrants working in Russia return to Moldova during the winter because of low demand for labour in the construction industry. Secondly, the countries of destination and their status as informal/formal workers. Moldovan men can more easily travel to Russia (lack of visa requirements, knowledge of the language, and the low costs of travel and employment) as compared to a female migrant in an EU country.

- Data on education and occupation of migrants shows that many men working in Russia had the same occupation they used to have in Moldova (prior to migration they worked as drivers, electricians, mechanics and construction workers). Women migrant workers are generally better qualified than male migrants workers in terms of level of education and previous occupation), but there is less alignment of skills in the case of women abroad. Although in Moldova they have been employed as doctors, teachers, nurses or public servants, they often do a job that does not match their skills.
- As the data collected for the IASCI Nexus Migration Survey 2013 shows, a greater proportion of women migrants are older than 30. In part, this may be explained by the fact that younger women are caring for small children and it is hard to leave them in the care of someone else.
- Women migrants have more access to social protection. In each type of social and labour protection, women migrants benefit more compared with male migrants. In particular, they have better access to health insurance, paid sick leave, unemployment insurance and social security. A risk profile of migrants (CBS AXA 2013) tends to confirm these findings. It shows that the incidence of *successful* migrants is higher among women (64%) compared to 59% for males and the incidence of *exploited* migrants is higher among men (68.7%) compared to women migrants (31.5%). One explanation of this gender dichotomy is the nature of migration patterns outlined above: the nature of seasonal work with less need to formalize labour relationships, the construction industry being a sector with very high informal employment, the country of destination that influences migrants' propensity to formalize.
- Women are more interested in assistance related to social security, state health insurance, state pension scheme as well as assistance in reskilling/retraining, than men, who tend to be more interested in help with business start-ups.

<sup>1</sup> Extended migration profile of the Republic of Moldova 2005-2010, International Organization for Migration, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Innovation in Circular Migration, Nexus-Moldova 2014

<sup>3</sup> Costs and benefits of labour mobility between the EU and Eastern Partnership partner countries, Country Study Moldova.

## Reasons for labour emigration

- The main push factor for Moldovan migrants is economic: poverty, lack of adequate employment opportunities and low wages, while higher living standards abroad act as a pull factor.
- Data on poverty shows that about 80% of Moldovan poverty is concentrated in rural areas. Due to lack of rural employment opportunities, rural women are more exposed to discrimination at work and domestic violence, and this is a major cause of migration.

## Destination countries

- Women represent a majority of migrants from Moldova working in the European Union (70%) and they stay abroad for longer (2.3 years on average), while men represent the majority of migrants from Moldova working in the Commonwealth of Independent States (two thirds), usually in seasonal work and stay abroad for shorter periods, up to 12 months.
- Women migrant workers choose Italy, Greece, Israel, and Turkey while male migrants more often choose destinations such as the Russian Federation, Portugal, Romania and Ukraine.
- With no gender specifics, contact between working migrants and foreign employers can be established based on an agreement between countries. Out of the six existent agreements only one is in operation, that with Israel, but it concerns only jobs in construction for men. Under the remaining agreements (with Azerbaijan, Poland, Slovenia, Italy and Kyrgyzstan) no employment is offered. No response has so far been received from Spain, France and Portugal in reply to letters from Moldova suggesting establishing similar agreements. In 2008 a new initiative, the “Mobility Partnership” was established. a partnership that covers 15 EU countries and Moldova. As a result of this, a new, improved agreement with Italy was signed in 2011.<sup>4</sup>
- The Government invites recruitment agencies to collaborate in drafting legislation. In order to promote migrants’ rights, the Government informs potential migrants through the National Employment Agency about ways of checking whether the particular recruitment agency is trustworthy.
- Various surveys confirm that migrants maintain solid levels of social cohesion. They choose their destination countries based on the choices of family and friends who have already emigrated, they meet other Moldovans abroad regularly, communicate frequently with those back home and quite frequently access homeland media.

## Remittances: Impact of Moldovan women migrant workers’ labour migration

- Remittances have represented and continue to represent the most substantial and stable contribution in foreign currency, compared with foreign direct investment, exports, loans, and external assistance. The respective foreign currency inflows have also contributed to increasing the state budget through value added tax (VAT) and import taxes, development of the banking system, financial mediation services, and increase of capital.
- Women migrant workers, on average, make more money transfers than men: 6.9 as compared to 6 per year, but the amount transferred by men is larger: – 4,699 euros against 4,127 euros for women<sup>5</sup>.
- Both men and women (73% in each case) preferred to send money through formal channels. Money transfer systems, such as Western Union, Money Gram are more popular among men 69% compared to 64% of women), while more women, albeit a minority of the total, send money via bus drivers or travel agencies (7% as compared to 3%). 45% of men and women also carry the money in person and 20% of each use bank transfers. 7% of men and 8% of women trust their friends or fellow migrant to carry the money personally.
- While remittances have contributed to decreasing poverty in the beneficiary households, and have increased access to education, less than 10 per cent of remittances are productively invested, the bulk being used for consumption and acquisition of real estate. A government owned remittances investment programme has, since 2010, attracted EUR 2.4 million of remittances into the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, with one-to-one match funds from government and donors.<sup>6</sup>
- There are significant differences in the purposes of money transfer. Women more often transfer money to support their spouse and children, emergencies and risks, and supporting other relatives. Men more often transfer for renovation, reconstruction of a house or apartment, savings, investment in a business.
- Moldovan women migrant workers are generally less interested than men in investing the money into a business or an infrastructure project, although a significant share of women would be inclined to do that if a good opportunity arose.. Prior to migration, a significant number of women migrants had worked in the retail trade, which might be a reason for the greater interest in investing in this particular area. However, the knowledge gap on how to start a business is considerable.

<sup>4</sup> Analysis of tendencies, causes, risks, vulnerabilities and capabilities regarding women migrating for work. Magenta for UN Women, 2015

<sup>5</sup> Innovation in circular migration. Migration and development in Moldova, Nexus, 2013

<sup>6</sup> Extended Migration profile of the Republic of Moldova 2005-2010, International Organization for Migration, 2012

- Based on the available data, women in migrant households are more dependent on remittances as an income source. Women more often stay at home, taking care of the children and not working, while men, even when they have children, at least find an occasional job and work in Moldova. This dependence is even more obvious in the case of rural populations.

## Policy review in line with international commitments

- In 1994, Moldova ratified one of the key treaties in terms of women's rights and gender equality, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**). The Convention provides a generic framework for the promotion of women migrant's rights. Even though it does not refer to migration specifically, CEDAW clearly states that states will enact legislative procedures and policies to ensure equal access of women to the labour market and social services. In 2008, CEDAW<sup>7</sup> prepared a general recommendation on women migrant workers for states of origin, transit states and countries of destination.
- In line with the CEDAW Convention, a legal review and analysis of migration, labour and trafficking laws was carried out in the Republic of Moldova. The revised laws include the following: the Act on entry to and exit from the country, Family Code, the Act on Labour Migration, the Regulation on the issue of identity documents and registering of citizens of the Republic of Moldova, the Regulation on the issue of birth certificates, the Police Act, the Regulation on allocations for families with children, the Civil Procedures Code of the Republic of Moldova, the Code on Contraventions, Civil Code and Act on Enterprises, Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Labour Code. The recommendations address the specific areas of intervention stipulated in the CEDAW Convention including Recommendation No. 26.
- A draft legislative act, based on 53 recommendations for amendment of 13 laws, to align national laws and secondary legislation in the area of migration, labour and human trafficking with the provisions and recommendations of CEDAW (specifically General Recommendation No. 26), was submitted for approval to the key line ministries.

## Services and interventions for the protection and promotion of women migrant workers' rights

- The Government disseminates information on migration and services provided at all three stages of migration, mainly through the National Employment Agency and its local branches. In addition, the Government adopted Decision No. 661 of 30 August, 2013 (published in the Official Journal of 06.09.2013, No. 191-197, art. 763) to provide a legal framework for the work and organization of the joint information services bureaus. These bureaus are a platform for providing quality gender-sensitive services to all categories of the population, including women migrants, in a coordinated manner. Recently, the functionality and degree of preparedness of 27 of 33 joint information and services bureaus was assessed on the quality of services provided to users, including women migrants. This was done through field visits to evaluate the functionality of the JISBs and identify their capacity building needs, in terms of strengthening skills to improve the quality of services, including electronic services provided to users.
- As part of the situational analysis, the Guide on services provided at local level was revised, and a separate chapter on important information and services for migrants was prepared, covering services and information provided by the government and non-government organizations, at all stages of migration.
- The interviews with the NGOs revealed, that three organizations, La Strada, Nexus and IOM, provide services to both men and women, albeit while endeavouring to pay special attention to women. La Strada has several key areas of competence, while Nexus is mainly an information centre. IOM deals with migration issues all over the world. It can assist Moldovan citizens who have no clear status abroad to get back home, carry out research on various migration-related topics, always disaggregated by gender. Special attention is paid by La Strada and IOM to the subject of human trafficking and its prevention.
- Policy makers have advanced gender analysis skills and are better able to formulate gender sensitive migration policies thanks to capacity building activities provided by the UN Women project.
- Key line ministries spokespersons and journalists are better able to communicate on migration-related policies and manage communication with the diaspora during crisis events, thanks to capacity building interventions through the UN Women project.
- Women migrants and their support groups are better prepared from a legal point of view to demand respect for their human and labour rights

<sup>7</sup> General Recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers, [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/GR\\_26\\_on\\_women\\_migrant\\_workers\\_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/GR_26_on_women_migrant_workers_en.pdf)

from state authorities, due to the training on the application of the UN Human Rights system, with support from UN Women and OHCHR. Initiative groups of women migrants were established as a result of interventions to motivate them to form associations to better engage with state authorities in promoting and protecting their human and labour rights.

- Migrants have prepared a resolution on key reintegration issues for migrants including entrepreneurship opportunities, to be submitted to the key relevant line ministries and the Bureau for Diaspora Relations for incorporation in their strategic action documents.
- A model one-stop shop was developed to provide quality services to users, including women migrants, at local level, by enhancing the capacities of services providers (in partnership with joint information and services bureaus, service providers, the State Chancellery, Milab, E-Governance Centre, USAID representatives, and IASCI/NEXUS).
- Women migrants from diaspora associations are better informed about their human and labour rights, and awareness was raised on developing greater partnerships with diplomatic missions and the central public administration on strengthening their organizational capacities in order to promote and protect their human and labour rights. This was largely due to the diaspora associations' mapping exercise to identify the most active women leaders and their capacity building needs. A capacity building plan addressing the major issues and concerns of women migrants identified was developed and is to be implemented.

### Lessons learnt are as follows:

- Systematic capacity building initiatives for key line ministries need to take place in order to maintain the institutional memory on mainstreaming migration into development agenda from the gender perspective;
- Partnership and collaboration through joint efforts is essential in order to ensure a greater impact of raising awareness on promoting and protecting human and labour rights;
- Women migrants need to associate in women migrants' associations/organizations to become strong and vocal in demanding the fulfilment of their human and labour rights by public authorities;
- Information on public services and entrepreneurship opportunities for women migrants need to be systematically disseminated at local level in order to reach the service users;
- Links between central and local public administrations need to be fostered in order to allow greater engagement with ordinary citizens, including local women migrants;

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